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24 March 1958


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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No

USSR - possible suspension of nuclear tests: The USSR may be preparing to announce some form of suspension of nuclear tests. In early March Khrushchev told a Western official that the Soviet Union was going to stop testing and production of thermonuclear weapons, and the Soviet ambassador to Vienna recently told Chancellor Raab that Moscow would soon announce suspension of nuclear weapons tests. The tempo of Soviet nuclear tests in the first three months of 1958 has been the highest yet observed.

Kremlin leaders probably feel that unilateral action-- which could later be reversed if the other nuclear powers fail to follow suit--would have a tremendous psychological impact. They may also believe that it would undercut Western efforts to enforce any ban on tests through an inspection system.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Syria: The resignation of Lt. Gen. Afif Bizri as commander of the United Arab Republic First Army in Syria removes the last of the prominent pro-Soviet Syrians influential in Syrian politics at the time of the recent union with Egypt and reflects Nasir's firm control. Nasir claims that he had suspected pro-Soviet Bizri of being controlled by "outside forces," and when Bizri submitted a hasty resignation over the issue of army appointments, Nasir quickly accepted. [REDACTED]

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ILLEGIB

Lebanon: President Chamoun's determination to try for a second consecutive term may lead to civil disorder. He says that he is providing arms to Christian elements as a counter to Moslems armed by Syria and Egypt and that he is aware that a major conflict may develop. The gendarmerie and army should be capable of handling any disturbances. [REDACTED]

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Laos: The Communists could make a good showing in the 4 May elections for 21 new seats in the National Assembly. The two leading conservative parties have been unable to resolve their differences and still have 53 candidates in the field. The Communists, in contrast, have been working hard, avoiding controversial issues, and are posing as the champions of Buddhism, the crown, and established Laotian traditions. [REDACTED]

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DAILY BRIEF

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No Japan - Taiwan - Communist China: The Chinese Nationalist Government may take further action to pressure Tokyo to deny any Chinese Communist trade delegation the right to fly Peiping's flag in Japan. Such action might include an attempt to promote a boycott by pro-Nationalist Overseas Chinese of Japanese goods and attempts to seize Japanese shipping bound for Communist China. [redacted]

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III. THE WEST

OR De Gaulle - USSR: Efforts to foster an understanding between General De Gaulle on the one hand and the French Communist party and Moscow on the other appear to be under way in France. Soviet ambassador Vinogradov has been active in this respect, and a leading Gaullist has tried to sound out the French Communist party. De Gaulle has frequently proclaimed his hostility to Communism. The French Communist party, however, might see his return as precipitating a popular front, and Moscow may see possibilities of weakening NATO and facilitating a French-Soviet rapprochement. [redacted]

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OR Haiti: There are indications that an attempt to oust the weak Duvalier government may be made shortly by a combination of Duvalier's political rivals and former army strong man Kerekou. Dominican dictator Trujillo may be involved in the plot, which could result in considerable bloodshed. [redacted]

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Moscow Hinting Unilateral Suspension of Nuclear Tests

In early March Khrushchev told a Western ambassador that the Soviet Union was going to stop producing and testing thermonuclear weapons since its present bomb design "functioned perfectly" and it "already had enough to blow up the world." He added that tests of "normal bombs" would be continued. The Soviet party chief, in a speech on 14 March, predicted that public pressures will eventually force governments to undertake unilateral stoppage of weapons manufacture. The Soviet ambassador to Austria recently told Chancellor Raab that the USSR will make a unilateral declaration suspending nuclear tests.

While such statements might be deliberately designed to "soften" the current Western position on disarmament, there are certain factors including impending United States tests including thermonuclear weapons which make a unilateral Soviet suspension of thermonuclear tests particularly timely. The current series of Soviet thermonuclear tests has been conducted at a rapid pace, and achievement of the immediate objectives of the USSR's thermonuclear weapons development program may be imminent. The Kremlin probably estimates that the public impact of its demonstrations over the past six months in the field of weapons systems would eliminate any appearance of military weakness which a unilateral action might otherwise suggest.

A major advantage, from the Soviet point of view, of a unilateral declaration in the nuclear weapons field would be to undercut Western efforts to enforce a suspension of tests or weapons manufacture through an inspection system. Soviet leaders probably believe that a test suspension would also have a heavy impact in Britain, where the Labor party is advocating a temporary test suspension and some of its members are publicly demanding a complete halt in nuclear weapons production.

Such a declaration would require a dramatic setting. The most obvious occasion would be the convening of the new Supreme Soviet, which has been hurriedly called for 27 March.

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Nasir Accepts Bizri's Resignation

Lt. Gen. Afif Bizri submitted his resignation in a "huff" over Cairo's insistence on overseeing the appointment of personnel under his command in the United Arab Republic's First Army in Syria, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Bizri, the last of the prominent pro-Soviet Syrians, had used the tactic before, but this time Nasir quickly accepted and announced it in the Cairo press without Bizri's knowledge.

Nasir is also reported to have stated that he had given Bizri many chances to "prove himself" following the union of Egypt and Syria, but he believed Bizri was controlled by "outside forces." He added that he had determined earlier to dispense with Bizri, and took advantage of this opportunity.

It was generally believed that Nasir would not allow Bizri to remain in any prominent position for long and his recent promotion to lieutenant general and command of the First Army was considered a "kick upstairs." The fact that he forced the resignation at this time demonstrates Nasir's confidence that his authority in the military and political affairs of the new union is absolute. [REDACTED]

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Lebanese Internal Crisis Approaching

Opponents of Lebanese President Chamoun are predicting "bloody civil war" if he tries in May to push through parliament a constitutional amendment allowing him to run for a second consecutive term as president. These opponents, known as the "Third Force" and including Christians as well as Moslems, are reported to have prepared an ultimatum to be presented to Chamoun on 27 March. They argue that the president's withdrawal would strip anti-Western and pro-Nasir extremists of their best campaign issue. If Chamoun refuses to withdraw, the group plans to call a general strike which would end in violence. Chamoun has stated that as a counter to Egyptian and Syrian arming of Moslems in Lebanon, he is providing friendly Christian elements with weapons.

Chamoun, who appears to believe that Lebanon's pro-Western orientation can be preserved only by his continuance in office, is conducting his campaign in a manner deliberately calculated to portray his opposition as enemies of the traditional pro-Christian character of Lebanon. His objective is to make the Christians believe that their survival depends on his retaining the presidency.

While there is a good possibility of civil disturbances in the next few weeks, widespread open conflict is not likely. The gendarmerie and army could cope with local outbreaks, and Christian-Moslem strife probably would be averted by the intervention of army chief General Fuad Shihab, who might take over the government for an interim period pending new parliamentary elections. A similar situation arose in 1952, when President Khuri was forced to resign. [REDACTED]

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25X1A [REDACTED]

25X1A [REDACTED]

Communists in Laos May Make Good Showing in
May Elections

Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma estimates that the Communist-dominated Neo Lao Hak Zat party (NLHZ) will win from four to eight seats in the critical 4 May national elections for 21 new National Assembly seats. Unless the two main conservative parties--the Nationalist and Independent--are able to compose their present differences, the prospects are that the Communists will do even better.

The winning of five seats by the NLHZ would be regarded in Laos as a good showing for a party so recently organized. Victory in ten or more constituencies would be considered an upset and put the Communists in a strong position to demand greater participation in the government. It would also greatly enhance their prospects in the 1959 elections for all 60 assembly seats.

The NLHZ is pressing its campaign with zeal. It is attempting to pose as the true champion of Buddhism, the crown, and established Laotian traditions. Except for its strong advocacy of neutralism, it is avoiding controversial issues and de-emphasizing its Communist complexion.

The Nationalists and Independents who were supposed to have agreed to the formation of a consolidated slate by 1 April still have 53 candidates in the field. Moreover, a meeting of party leaders on 21 March to work out a joint propaganda campaign, establish provisional headquarters, and devise methods of popularizing candidates ended in failure.

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Chinese Nationalists May Take Further Action Against Japan

Nationalist China's Foreign Minister George Yeh has informed Ambassador Drumright that he is under "increasing pressure" to step up retaliatory measures against Japan designed to prevent the flying of Peiping's flag by a Communist Chinese trade delegation in Japan. Yeh said that Nationalist legislators and others were urging "drastic steps" including a boycott of Japanese goods, but that he prefers to limit action to suspension of trade between Taiwan and Japan and is not encouraging these proposals.

Whether Yeh will succeed is doubtful. The Japanese ambassador is scheduled to return to Taipei about the end of March with an explanation of Tokyo's position. During the interim, Chiang Kai-shek may decide to increase pressure for a favorable reply by promoting an Overseas Chinese boycott of Japanese goods. He also may order seizure of Japanese shipping bound for Communist China.

Ambassador MacArthur reports that the Japanese Government tentatively plans a public statement by Prime Minister Kishi next week, approving the trade agreement and promising the government's support and cooperation to the Communist trade mission, but announcing that the government is unable to "take cognizance of the raising of the national flag of Communist China on the building of its private trade mission." Such a statement almost certainly would not satisfy Chiang Kai-shek. [REDACTED]

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25X1A [REDACTED]

III. THE WEST

Communist Efforts to Promote Understanding With De Gaulle

Efforts to establish some sort of understanding between General de Gaulle on the one hand and the French Communist party (PCF) and Moscow on the other have been reported recently [redacted]

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[redacted] Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov is actively cultivating French business leaders and advocating a "national independent position" for a De Gaulle-led France. He promises Soviet "support" for a solution of North African problems to enable France to assume a strong position between the US and the USSR. Vinogradov may have mentioned this during his recent visit to De Gaulle.

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[redacted] an ardent Gaullist, Senator Edmond Michelet has adopted Vinogradov's suggestion that the PCF be sounded out concerning its attitude toward the general. Michelet appears to feel that De Gaulle's "liberal" ideas for an Algerian solution will ultimately alienate many rightists, but may stir up substantial support among leftists.

De Gaulle himself has attacked Communism both publicly and privately. Nevertheless, the PCF, while continuing its public opposition to De Gaulle, might consider his return desirable in the long run as facilitating its hitherto futile efforts to rally leftist parties in a popular front. Furthermore, Moscow sees in De Gaulle's return possibilities of weakening NATO and fostering a French-Soviet rapprochement.

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Dominican Republic May Be Involved in Plans to Oust
Haitian Government

General Kebreau, former Haitian strong man who was relieved as army chief of staff by President Duvalier on 12 March, may be the key figure in plans by Duvalier's political rivals and by Generalissimo Trujillo of the Dominican Republic to oust the seriously weakened Duvalier regime. Trujillo has long distrusted Duvalier and had hoped to use Kebreau to control the president.

25X1C Despite categorical denials by Dominican officials including the generalissimo himself. [redacted] 25X1C
[redacted] Kebreau 25X1C
is either in the Dominican Republic or somewhere on the
Haitian-Dominican border. [redacted]
the Dominicans have given Kebreau a clandestine radio
station at a border hideout where he is working with
followers of Clement Jumelle, a bitter rival of Duvalier.
Another indication of Dominican intrigue was the arrival
in Port-au-Prince on 19 March of John Abbes, head of
Dominican intelligence who directed Dominican subversion
in Guatemala last year.

25X1 Underground activity by followers of Jumelle is
being "feverishly organized," [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] Duvalier's other principal rival Louis Dejoie
has indicated, [redacted] that 25X1C
Kebreau can count on his support. A determined move
against the government now would have a good chance of
ousting Duvalier. The army is divided and the public al-
25X1A ready apprehensive. [redacted]

✓ 25X1A [redacted] 25X1A
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